

U.S. Biotech Crops Alliance

December 10, 2014

Ambassador Michael Froman
U.S. Trade Representative
Office of the U.S. Trade Representative
Washington, DC 20508

The Honorable Penny Pritzker
Secretary of the U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
Washington, DC 20230

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Ambassador Froman, Secretary Pritzker and Secretary Vilsack:

The U.S. Biotech Crops Alliance (USBCA), comprised of the undersigned organizations, thanks you and your senior staff for the extraordinary effort over the past year to elevate the importance of agricultural biotechnology and trade to the overall U.S. - China relationship. Securing this issue on the agenda of President Obama's meeting with President Xi was no small task and we recognize your leadership and commitment to a well-coordinated effort on China across your respective agencies. Going forward, we view the upcoming U.S. - China Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade (JCCT) as a pivotal follow-on meeting to set the course for marked improvement.

In order to ensure meaningful progress, the USBCA believes that it is essential for the JCCT to result in a comprehensive framework agreement establishing a schedule of commitments to provide for market access for U.S. agricultural crops produced through the use of biotechnology and ensuring timely action on all pending applications, at various stages of the biotech review process. Action on only a subset of biotech-enhanced crops will not provide the necessary predictability to the U.S. value chain as there continues to be crops authorized for cultivation in the United States that are not approved in China. This creates untenable risk to exporters of U.S. origin grains and oilseeds and provides an advantage to competitor agricultural exporting nations.

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Further, the framework agreement should include a mutually beneficial means to address how to proactively manage situations that place Chinese access to U.S. commodity supplies at risk. Opening market access for U.S. grain and oilseed exports should not be seen as a regulatory issue, but as a trade facilitation matter. Our trading relationship depends upon finding alternative means to manage asynchronous approvals in ways that do not result in unnecessary and costly trade disruptions.

China remains the utmost international priority for the U.S. Biotech Crops Alliance. We look forward to continuing to work closely with your office as the framework agreement is being crafted and implemented. Accordingly, we request a high level meeting with you and the leadership of the USBCA in early 2015 to discuss how to maintain the level of engagement required to bring this issue to resolution in the near term.

Sincerely,

American Farm Bureau Federation
American Seed Trade Association
American Soybean Association
Biotechnology Industry Organization
Corn Refiners Association
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Corn Growers Association
National Grain and Feed Association
National Oilseed Processors Association
North American Export Grain Association
U.S. Canola Association
U.S. Grains Council
U.S. Soybean Export Council

Cc: Ambassador Darci Vetter
USDA Deputy Secretary Krysta Harden
DOC Deputy Secretary Bruce Andrews